

Note of the Senior Management Team Meeting held on Wednesday 30 July 2014

Present:

Jim Martin	Ombudsman (Chair)
Niki Maclean	Director
Emma Gray	Head of Policy and External Communications
Paul McFadden	Head of Complaints Standards

In attendance:

Fiona Paterson	Senior Personal Assistant (Secretary)
Rachel Nicholson	Executive Casework Officer

1. The meeting opened at 13:00 with no apologies. The note of the meeting held on 3 June 2014 was agreed with no amendments and the outstanding actions list was reviewed. The SMT noted all actions were on target for completion by the due dates.

2. Team Managers' Updates

Advice Team – Apologies were noted from Carol Neill, Advice Team Manager.

Early Resolution Team

Kathleen Steindl, Early Resolution Team Manager, was invited to the meeting to provide a Q1 update on her area of the organisation. KS highlighted the good momentum which had been carried through from Q4. She updated the SMT on particularly interesting casework from Q1 and gave specific examples of people-centred complaint handling by team members she had noted. KS also noted there had been a disproportionate rise in time needed for a small number of cases requiring lengthy phone calls and contacts, some of which were very emotional. In summary, despite some difficult personal circumstances in the team there was good commitment and morale.

The Ombudsman thanked KS for providing the update to the senior management team.

Investigations Team

Judy Saddler, Investigations Team Manager, was invited to the meeting to provide an update on her area of the organisation for Q1. JS noted that the high caseloads of increasingly complex cases was proving challenging for the team. To manage this caseload the CRs were working individual holding bays of cases newly transferred, or ready for drafting. This was causing a mismatch with customer expectations. Additionally, WorkPro administration is causing some frustration in the team, and it is hoped this may be addressed in the project JS will be taking forward with the information analyst. A proposal to relieve case levels currently under consideration was that non-complex GP cases would remain in the ER team for completion. This and other options will be discussed with the Director.

It has been noted that the complexity of cases was increasing, with some health cases requiring multiple types of advice. Additionally, the advice received was being increasingly challenged by NHS Boards. Significant issues with one NHS Board had been noted and the SMT would be discussing what action may be taken.

The Ombudsman thanked JS for providing the update to the senior management team.

3. Financial Monitoring Report

The SMT noted the three financial documents tabled as follows:

- the year-to-date expenditure against budget and unbudgeted liabilities as known. The SMT noted the unbudgeted liabilities which were being monitored closely, and should they not be absorbed within the existing approved budget there is an option to apply to the SPCB for contingency funds.
- the draft Annual Accounts, which were reviewed by the SMT who suggested minor improvements to the management commentary. The SMT were informed the final version would be submitted to the AAC on 5 August.
- the 2013-14 Statement of Expenditure for publication, which the SMT approved for publication, a with minor amendments.

4. Risk Management Report

The SMT reviewed the 2014-15 Risk Register and made no changes, then discussed the proposed risk interrogation report for the AAC meeting.

5. Performance Report – Corporate Services

The SMT approved the following recommendations:

- a. the decommissioning of the Video conference suite for an annual saving of circa £2,600.;
- b. moving to 2nd class franked mail from the introduction of MailMark, with an annual saving of more than £1,300; and
- c. the proposal to bring all SPSO policies into related handbooks to enhance accessibility, continuity and maintenance of all policies.

The SMT noted the Annual Contracts Summary and discussed those contracts due for retender this year.

The SMT approved the staff survey findings for internal publication on the Intranet, excluding Annex 3.

6. Performance Report – Casework

The SMT discussed the casework performance for July, particularly noting the increase in cases received and closed against projections.

The SMT agreed that the QA of professional advice would continue in line with casework QA.

7. Performance Report – Policy Group

The SMT approved the recommendation to a change in the media policy, which will mean the Policy Team will no longer facilitate contact between journalists and complainants unless the complainant has requested such support. Letter templates to complainants will be updated to reflect this change.

The SMT discussed the request by CRs for a single points of contact to be enforced with two NHS Boards. Following discussion, the SMT asked EG to clarify to all staff why this was not possible in these specific instances.

8. Service Improvement Report

The SMT noted the Organisational Learning report for Q1 and approved it for publication. The SMT discussed the QA results for Q4 2013-14.

The meeting closed at 15:30